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CPL Gang publications

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OUR COVER: Paul Gulacy, artist of Marvel's Master of Kung-Fu, renders his version of the goddess of Self-abuse. (I can't believe I'm saying this!)

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CONTRIBUTORS! Please refrain from sending in samples unless you can put any of our regular CPL artists to shame.

SPECIAL THANKS DEPT.: To Motown Mike Vosburg and his wife, Deb . . . for all their kindness. Also to Raunchy Rogie for all the leg-work.

AND IN OUR NEXT ISSUE—

Words, pictures, maybe some numbers (Then-kyo, PK!)

CPL #13 will hearld the return of Sterno's Hot Ones (Whether you like it or not), yet another sizzling Grant's Tomb, part three in the irregular **CPL** mini-series "The Secret Life of Peter Parker" by Frank Maynerd, another of John Byrne's Northern Lights columns (this time on Doctor Doom), and lots more! Art? But of course! Art out the wazoo as per usual!

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EDITORIAL

BY ROGER STERN

"Unfortunately, Atlas is what comics is all about . . ."

So writes author Steven Grant in his analysis of publisher Martin Goodman's attempts at re-entering the comics field. And we must agree. Think for a moment of the really ugly things that go on in comics publishing —the deliberate rack-crowding, the unearned braggadocio, the high-handed treatment of creative personnel—and you'll relize that Atlas has in a sense become a microcosm of the industry. We have seen a handful of shockingly beautiful books and a carload of tripe.

"But wait a minute," some will way. "Is it really fair to judge a line on its first few efforts?"

Normally, no. However, in looking back on the six "first issues" Mr. Grant puts under the glass, we find that some general conclusions can be drawn. First and foremost, it is clear that a free, creative hand can devise a damn good comic. And no better examples can be found than in Hama's **Wulf** and Chaykin's **Scorpion.** Secondly, Jeff Rovin had no business being an editor. The books he presided over himself were somewhat less than totally entertaining masterworks. And through his interferrence Messrs. Chaykin and Hama left their books in a state of what can most politely be called disgust. Luckily, Mr. Rovin is now gone. It remains to be seen if the damage he did can be corrected.

All of this is not to say that Atlas is on the skids. The departure of Rovin helped some. The arrival of former Marvel staffer Dave Kraft may help a lot more. But there's still a long rocky road ahead for the crew at 717 Fifth Avenue.

And it's so hard to make a comeback when you've hardly even started.

This twelfth issue of **CPL** just sort of grew . . . like Topsy. We now sport color covers . . . we finally found a relatively inexpensive way to do it! We are now typeset instead of typewritten. This is not so inexpensive, but it **is** necessary.

You want an explanation? Okay, you've got one!

When we started producing our sister magazine, the **Charlton Bullseye,** we discovered that it just wasn't feasible to count out all of the words, letters and spaces that needed to be typed in the same way we did for **CPL.** It took too much time. So we went typeset. We could do it with nary a problem on **Bullseye** as it was a larger book with a bigger print-run and a higher price.

But when we started to go into production on **CPL** #12, we ran into problems. We couldn't produce one magazine one way and one another. There just wasn't time. So we went typeset on **CPL**, as well.

And we raised the price to **$** .75.

And we don't like it anymore than you do.

We'd much rather stay at our nice old price. But if we did, Bob Layton would have to start knocking over liquor stores and gas stations in order to put **CPL** out. And neither he nor the State Attorney General are quite ready for that!

So here we are for **$** .75 . . . four times a year . . . with ever-lovin' color covers . . . and type so clear you can read every word.

And here's a promise . . . we'll change our format before we have to raise prices again! It wouldn't be fair to charge more than **$**.75 for a magazine this size. Even if we are worth it!

Old timers amongst you will notice that there is . . . there are? . . . no Sterno's Hot Ones this issue . . . and for a very good reason! There wasn't any room! Nor is Steve Gerber with us this issue. What with that crazy writer becoming a **Crazy** editor, and a number of new titles starting up . . . well, you've heard of the dreaded deadline doom. Dogs willing, he'll be back with us next issue.

So, what's in this issue?

Glad you asked!

Motown Mike Vosburg has been involved with comics for quite some time. He was the editor of **Masquerader,** one of the earliest fanzines. He's dabbled in the undergrounds, and most recently he's been doing ghost stories and such for Charlton and Shang Chi for Marvel's **Deadly Hands of Kung Fu.** Mike's a fine artist and draws women better than anybody we know! And if you paid any attention at all to our table of contents, you'll know that Mike is the subject of this issues provocative **CPL** Interview.

Writer Steven Grant, who is beginning to gain some kind of notoriety in writing circles for his work on the comics adaptations of Elric . . . and in wisenheimer circles for his extremely well-done sarcasms at various comics conventions . . . puts both of his talents to work in his two-part look at the Atlas/Seaboard line, as mentioned earlier.

Pundit William Wu turns his own barbed wit loose on the houses of Charlton, National, and Marvel with an interlude in one act that points out the emergency of the new-old oriental stereotype.

And Jocular Johnny Byrne chimes in with the second part of his "Bad Guys We've Known And Loved" miniseries, this time psychoanalysing Darkseid. In addition, the multi-talented Mr. Byrne teams up with Joe Staton to render the tale of "The Inheritors," a six-page graphic fantasy in the captivating **CPL** manner.

And while we're on the subject of Calgary's Private Lover, we'd like to remind you that John is now pencilling **Iron Fist** for Marvel as well as fully rendering **Doomsday Plus 1** . . . yes, and **Wheelie and the Chopper Bunch** . . . for Charlton. We encourage you to buy all three. (This has been a Free Political Announcement on behalf of the John Byrne for Messiah Committee. The congregation will now rise for a chorus of "Hail, Canada!" And I want to hear you tenors this time!)

Getting back to **CPL**, we draw your attention to our jolly green centerspread boy. Seems that Papa Joe Sinnott's ever-lovin', blue-eyed PlayThing way back in issue eight brought the green-eyed tinge of jealousy to a certain emerald-hued stomper. So when we offered him the chance to pose, he . . . uh . . . jumped at the opportunity. Need we say more?

AND ALSO FROM CPL/GANG PUBLICATIONS—

Charlton Bullseye #2 is now on sale with art by Newton, Byrne, Wildman, Starlin & Milgrom, and Sattler . . . "Two Against Sunurla," the thrilling conclusion to the final showdown between Captain Atom and the Ghost by Ditko and Byrne . . . "Moonshift," a five-page science-fiction short by Steve Ditko . . . articles by Howard Siegel and yours truly . . . and all between stunning color covers by Staton and Newton respectively for only a buck . . . $5.50 for a years subscription.

Charlton Bullseye #3 will follow in two months. **CB** #3 is the Kung Fu special issue featuring Sanho Kim's "Wrong Country," twenty-four pages of martial arts action . . . plus work by Frank McLaughlin . . . and the biggest comics news ever to come out of Derby, Connecticut!

In the meantime keep your nose clean, read a comic book every night, and be here again in three months!

MILGROM
&
STARLIN

CPL RAPS WITH...

MIKE VOSBURG

BOY ARTIST

VOSBERG INTERVIEW

CPL: How do you feel about picking up stuff in your room? (Cleaning up after drawing)

VOS: How do I feel about it?

CPL: Yes. . .

VOS: (Laughter) It's just something I have to do now and then to keep things organized. Is that the best question you can come up with to start an interview?

CPL: Allow me to ask you some real earth-shaking-questions like where you grew up at . . . that sort of thing?

VOS: Well, I grew up in the Detroit area here in a place called Pontiac, Michigan, and I spent most of my life there. I went to school there . . . I went to a college nearby. I taught school there for two or three years. And I've spent the last couple of years in Detroit. Other than that, I just lived around the Pontiac area.

CPL: What ever made you decide to get into comics?

VOS: Well, I have always enjoyed comics. Like when I was in school there was a friend who interested me in drawing little home-made comics that we traded back and forth. Eventually, Jerry Bails came out with his first fanzine back in the early 60's. I wrote to him and he turned me on to fanzines and such. So I started doing those. Well, I showed you **The Masquerader** that I put out.

CPL: You used to be the publisher of **Masquerader**, weren't you?

VOS: Yeah. I used to be pretty proud of the stuff I put out because I thought it was well done. But eventually it got to the point where I was essentially an editor for **Masquerader** and I wanted to spend more drawing. So I dropped out of the editing and started to do just drawing. At the same time, I came to a point in my life where I just kinda felt like comic books were not what I wanted to do for a career. So I went to college and got a teaching degree.

CPL: So you taught school for awhile?

VOS: Yeah. I taught for, like . . . 3 years. After I taught for awhile, I kind of had that same feeling that it really wasn't what I wanted to do. I mean I liked it, and all that . . . but I found myself spending more and more time on my drawing again. So I figured that I'd might as well give it a try again, and see what I could do . . . drawing for a living. So I quit teaching and started working on my comics again. After a couple of years . . . I started getting work. That's basically what I'm doing right now . . . drawing comics for a living.

CPL: Okay. So how did you first get into the industry, then? Who did you approach first with your samples?

VOS: Well, the first thing I did, I drew up pages for the undergrounds because they were the fastest ones to break into the industry. You didn't need a whole lot of talent to get into them. There was a lot of talented people that did stuff for them but the thing with the undergrounds was the fact that there was probably a handful of really-talented underground artists that should have been doing the stuff. Like I said, there were people that were willing to put the money into them, and see if they could make money off them. That's not fair to them. Let me say rather, that they want to produce something, of their own, that just about anybody that could draw could get work published in an underground. Maybe, sometime, even make money off it. So as a result, everyone started pouring stuff into the undergrounds. And I think I was the classic example of someone that didn't belong in the undergrounds, but it was a place to get my work printed. So I did the work! And I think that what eventually caused their decline was the fact that there were a lot of people around there that didn't belong there. I was telling you this last night. I think they are basically politically oriented. That's really what sold the undergrounds. Also they were a place you could throw in a lot of sexual materials that the normal comic couldn't carry. What happened was the revolutionary revolt or movement was absorbed into society, the youth grew up, all the sexual material was available elsewhere. As a result the undergrounds kind of fizzled. I think the basic problem why they weren't saleable, was that the really quality material was so diluted that you just didn't see much of it, including my stuff.

CPL: I've never seen it. Do you have any here?

VOS: Sure I'll show you some. (Mike hands CPL undergrounds he'd done)

CPL: So you did undergrounds for awhile then you decided to go on into comics. How did you go about getting into it?

VOS: The undergrounds kept my interest, without them I think I might have quit and said there isn't a place for me. But I kept plugging away, and eventually Paul Kune at Gold Key gave me some stories to do . . . which he immediately regretted. But again, it kept me going at it. Then Joe Orlando saw some of my later samples and he had me do some stories for him. After that I took some stuff up to Charlton, and they gave me some work. At that time my work progressed to a point where I was feeling most confident in it, and the work should have been pretty steady. But then the paper shortage came along.

CPL: That's when Charlton shut down for awhile.

VOS: Right. It took away regular assignments for me. So I talked to Rich Buckler, and he got me a story at Marvel.

CPL: Which one was that?

VOS: It hasn't been printed yet. The first thing I did for them hasn't even been scripted yet.

CPL: That sounds like Marvel.

VOS: They were very happy with the story so they looked around and gave me the Shang-Chi feature to do. So I spent the last six months or a year working on that.

CPL: You said earlier that you'd like to get off Shang-Chi. Why?

VOS: I enjoyed it very much when I started because I was used to doing comic books. If I did six pages of material on a story I thought I was really working. Doing Shang-Chi I had to do fifteen pages a month. Not only fifteen pages a month, but fifteen pages of the same character. It was really a good experience for me because it was my first strip and it gave me a chance to develop a character like that, and I enjoyed doing that. I think I got to the point where I wasn't adding anything to the strip. I wasn't creating with it. What ever creative efforts I had to put into it I burned out in six months, because I'm not a karate freak.

CPL: Are you into Kung-Fu at all, or have you seen the movies?

VOS: I've seen the movies, my wife is into karate. The technical things I checked out with her. As far as capturing the violence and emotion of the Kung-Fu thing I didn't feel like that was my strong point. So I really kind of wanted to get out of doing the strip. I didn't feel as if I was taking it anywhere after the first few issues. I don't think the people at Marvel themselves understood what to do with Shang-Chi. I think that Starlin and Englehart when they created the character really had something going, because they are two really creative people.

CPL: Sales prove that.

VOS: Yeah. Once they were off the book, I don't think the people that took it over really understood who Shaing-Chi was and I don't think really understood the character. I think Paul Gulacy has really done a good job with the strip, even though some of his artwork

disturbs me at times. I think he really captures the flavor of Shang-Chi. He captures his youth and he captures the mood of the story. And he really brings out the fighting scenes.

CPL: Paul likes that sort of thing. From what I understand he stands in front of a full-length mirror like you have here in your office. In the one sequence in the Giant-Size (the one Al Milgrom did the cover for), he pulls out the nunchukus and goes through this five panel sequence. Paul did this for hours in front of the mirror in order to get it right, then transferred it to paper.

VOS: I think that is what exactly makes good comics, a lot of enthusiasm. I have a lot of enthusiasm for the drawing, but again, karate is something I just really don't understand. I think I'm better on mystery type of stories where you need a lot of mood.

CPL: A lot of people were taken by your stories at Charlton. The mystery stories you did there I know I particularly enjoyed. I think there was one there about an old couple who syphoned off the youth of this couple that stayed there for the weekend, was the other one about "the Arena?"

VOS: Right. "The Arena" was like the first story that I did for them. It was a little stiff. I think it was also the first time that I inked myself. The good thing with working for Charlton was that the artist themselves got a little more control over what they do. Whereas when your working for a company like National or Marvel, before the pencils are inked they go through usually an editor or an assistant editor, and then the editor in charge. They make the changes they want. So what's happening is you're sometimes getting three different interpretations of what the story should be like. Now a lot of times it helps a strip, but there are also times when it destroys it, because each person has a different idea of what's going on. That hurts the story sometimes.

CPL: You're still working for Charlton, aren't you?

VOS: Right. I did a war story for them . . . because they needed it. I'm doing a romance story now, which I'm really having a good time doing because it's a lot of fun drawing these little idealized characters. The perfect teen-age couple . . . whatever.

CPL: You know, not too many people like doing love stories?

VOS: Well, I think the thing is,when you say "not too many like love stories," your talking about "not too many **comic fans**" like love stories. I think that's one of the things I've learned coming into the industry from comic fandom. The kind of things comic fans like, aren't the kind of things that sell comics.

CPL: I think that point was brought out well to the panel discussion at the Cosmicon in Toronto. When a fan asked Nick Cuti why Charlton insisted on putting out such "stinko" love comics. Nick simply stated, "We don't publish them for you! We publish them for the people who enjoy romance comics."

VOS: Yeah, if you could look at sales figures for the comic book industry, right now. Marvel comics and all their super-heroes, are selling better than probably anything else. Not being in that end of the industry, I don't know. But I'm sure that you would find that Uncle Schrooge has been a perinnial seller. And a lot of the Gold Key, what they call Funny books. Funny animal books have always sold well. The same is true with love stories . . . same was with Mystery books.

CPL: It's a variant-type thing . . . it depends on the artist and what he likes to do. A lot of artists prefer action. I couldn't see Kirby doing love stories the way he's drawing now, you know what I mean?

VOS: Oh! But he was the originator. He put out the first love stories, back in the 50's along with Joe Simon. **Secret Romance** or something like that.

CPL: But I was talking about the 1975 Kirby and what he's doing at National. Could you picture Jack penciling **Secrets of Young Brides** for Charlton? (Laughter) Some artists just don't fit that kind of mold.

VOS: Yeah, well . . . you'll find that most artists can do just about anything, but whether they look good on it is another story. I thought a lot of the National stuff they put out in the 60's . . . their super-heroes stuff, . . . most of their artists weren't suited for it. And I think as far as super-heroes go . . . Marvel has had the right idea. They have really gotten into the kids heads, and caught exactly what the kids want to see. That's the Marvel basis for Marvel idea of comic books is to catch in each panel the action at its ultimate peak! And that's what they are interested in. It holds their attention. Another thing, getting back to the whole fan idea, the average comic book fan looks at Frank Frazetta and is just astounded at the detail and the artistry of it! Him and guys like Williamson. But the average comic book reader just doesn't have the time to sit down and appreciate that stuff. When the average comic book reader looks at a comic, he wants it staring him in the face. He doesn't have time to study the figures and to see how all the anatomy has been carefully proportioned and how detailed all the little figures in the background are. They want to see it stuck right in front of their nose, and I think that is why Jack Kirby is so successful, because he brings everything right up in front of the reader. All he (the reader) has to do is look at it and it's all there.

CPL: Kirby is unusual in the fact that everything he draws is panorama and then he slaps a border around it, regardless to whether or not all the picture remains in the panel or is pushed out.

VOS: Well, Kirby is another artist that I really can't get excited about his drawing and that's something to myself, as an artist, is very important. I really love the drawing. But I think as far as producing a comic book

goes there are few people that can do it as well as Jack Kirby.

CPL: Although he may not be as popular as he used to be, I find there's still a great deal of respect for Kirby as the originator of the comic book super-heroes that we see today.

VOS: I think the problem with Kirby is that he's such a creative person that he's moved beyond the comic book. The comic book, as it is now, is just too confining a medium for someone like Jack Kirby. The only way he could come across now is if they print his stuff in the Dollar Book format, with fold-out pages that when you opened the book the hero would jump out at you! (Laughter) I think he's at the point now that everything he does is as good as it ever was . . . its just that everybody has seen it all before.

CPL: Is it true that Joe Kubert is the greatest artist in the world?

VOS: No. (Laughter)

CPL: I believe I've heard that quoted once, Mike.

VOS: I like Joe's work very much. I'd say he's my favorite cartoonist. There's just something about his work that when I look at it, nobody else has it. If you want to talk about better artists I think you can talk about Frazetta, Williamson. You could name hundreds of people that can draw better than Joe Kubert. But when it comes to putting it down in a comic book, Joe just does something that nobody else does. I wouldn't ever go and say that he's better than Jack Kirby but in his own way, he turns out comic books that no one else could ever do. For example, I don't think that Joe Kubert could ever turn out the type of super-heroes stuff that Jack Kirby could do. But I don't believe that Kirby could ever sit down and crank out a Tarzan page like Joe Kubert could do.

CPL: Well, I was just remembering a quote from a "certain fan" that use to write Kubert a lot. That's why I asked you that. (Laughter)

VOS: Right! As a kid, looking at Joe Kubert's stuff, I really thought that Joe Kubert was the greatest artist that had ever lived!

CPL: You use to write to him, didn't you?

VOS: Yeah! I hadn't seen everybody else at that time and look at it now, over all those years I still think that if I had one comic book that had to be done, and I needed an artist to do it, I'd use Joe Kubert. Regardless of what it was! (At this point the phone rings! Ding! Ding!)

CPL: Ok, where were we . . . Kubert, right? Did you use to be pen-pals with him?

VOS: Well, I wouldn't say "pen-pals." I wrote Joe as a fan a number of times. Now that I'm busy in comic books and I realize how much time it takes, I'm amazed that the man had enough time to write to me when I was a kid. Meeting Joe, he is a personable man. What can you say . . . I like his work but meeting him in person was also enjoyable. He's a great guy! That has nothing to do as to whether or not he's a good artist or not. You meet a lot of talented people in the industry that will turn you off personally. I think it takes a certain sort of individual to turn out good work.

CPL: Living here in Detroit, you grew up with guys like Rich Buckler, Jim Starlin, Al Milgrom . . . How do you think they've influenced your thinking as far as comic books go?

VOS: Quite a bit. The interesting thing is that I was a fan, and as a result, got started long before most of those guys. But when I dropped out of comics they all passed me up.

CPL: They just kept on improving?

VOS: Right. Probably, the one that draws the best is Rich Buckler.

CPL: Really? You mean as far as technical skills . . . ?

VOS: Hmmm . . . just in drawing ability. I think of all the guys . . . Rick draws the best. But also, I think Rich is more concerned with deadlines than anyone else, and, as a result, his drawing suffers a great deal of the time. But if you sit down and talk with Rich, he will tell you very honestly that drawing comics is a business, and that comic books are not the place for fine art.

CPL: But isn't it true that, although Rich has a lot of ability, he just doesn't get into most of what he does?

VOS: I don't think that's true at all! I think Rich is as much involved, or more involved, than any artist in his work. He loves comics!

CPL: How can you explain the hacking he does for . . .

VOS: But I also think at the same time, he doesn't have a great deal of patience. Simply because of the economic situation. (Laughter) I think if comics were a medium where they paid the artist a great deal of money, Rich would be able to slow down a bit. Comic books are a medium that rewards creativity, and I think Rich was one of the first people to find that out. If you want to do a lot of innovative and creative stuff in comics, you have to prove (1) that it would sell, (2) that it's good. And I think that Rich found that out. He accepts the fact, and he faces his work on that. A lot of people will call Rich a hack. And in sense, it might be true. But at the same time. I look at Rich's stuff and I think that he produces a comic book as readable and as interesting as anyone in the business. A lot of fans may get on him for not doing his best work, but Rich knows what he's doing. He's a great story-teller. A lot of people in the industry will disagree with me.

CPL: Why are you obsessed with drawing voluptuous females all the time . . . besides the obvious male drives? (Laughter)

VOS: My drawing of females is a very basic thing with me. When I was younger. I just never really had very much confidence in myself and all the drawing I did were pretty much an escape thing: I think you'll find that's true with a lot of people in comic books. The good people are the ones that can structure their drives and their creative ability and put it into something so they aren't frustrated. When I was younger or even now I realize I am bound by reality. That there are limits to who I am, what I can do, and where I am in this world. My drawings give me a chance to escape that by creating another world. If I ever meet the perfect woman, which is a terrible thing to say since I'm married, my wife and I talk about this and she understands what I'm talking about. I'm not talking about the ordinary. I'm not talking about Sophia Loren. I'm talking about the woman that puts Sophia Loren to shame. I'm talking bout the ultimate woman, the woman that walks down the street and there's an aura around her. Not only physically the most beautiful woman, but everything. More or less the female concept of "the god." I think that's what a lot of comic books try to get at is, we're not drawing people, we're drawing gods. Maybe that's why Kirby's stuff went over so good with the **New Gods** concepts because that's really what super-heroes are. They're like gods!

CPL: Something superior to human beings?

VOS: Right.

CPL: More like demi-gods.

VOS: Super-heroes like Kirby just reduced the old epic ideas we always have. The Norse gods, Roman gods, and reduced them to a modern level and called them super-heroes. Alright, that's what I want to do with the women that I draw. It's just something I find I enjoy a lot . . . sitting around drawing beautiful women. I can illustrate my sexual fantasies . . . put them down on paper and then I'm not frustrated. If I work a 9-5 job, I would have a lot of frustrations.

CPL: Tell me about Linda Lovecraft . . .

VOS: Linda Lovecraft is a creation I came up with working for the undergrounds. I never really felt I had a place in them. If they came out now I think that I've come up with some ideas now that really would fit well with the undergrounds. I think Linda Lovecraft is one of them. I admire Alfred Hitchcock in his subtlety. Alfred Hitchcock well-produced movies and will visualize very little on the screen. But will cause the viewer to visualize everything in his mind. That's what I want to do with Linda Lovecraft. It's not really a porno strip, but just a sexually-orientated strip. I don't really want a lot of sexually explicit material. I think that gets so boring. What I want to do is to create a sexually-orientated comic strip that the average person could look at and laugh at and enjoy without being directly stimulated. In other words Linda isn't a creation that you read behind the bathroom door. It's something you can pick up and get a good laugh about.

CPL: Sex is a laughable subject. So much of literature and movies are based around the sexual relationship between men and women, something that hasn't been explored in comic books.

VOS: I really don't want to over-due the sexual aspect of Linda either because it's only a starting point for her. I'm really interested in using her as a format for my humor. Which I think is something she is well suited for. Something I've always enjoyed. My early interest in comics was the Wally Wood stuff in **Mad.** To me those were the comics I always enjoyed. There isn't a lot of that around in the market now. So I slant my work in another direction to sell it. With Linda Lovecraft. I can do exactly what I want, which: is to create a humorous strip that is tongue and cheek. I could talk a lot about Linda Lovecraft, and what I had planned for her but it would be redundant in a sense, because what I have to say about her in the strip . . . talking for hours and it's the old story "a picture is worth a thousand words." I think with Linda that's pretty much what I'll have to do. Basically, the personality that I want for Linda is . . . she is technically the villian. But a very friendly villian, a very lovable villian let's say. She really doesn't do anyone any harm. And if she did they kind of deserved it any way.

CPL: More of a prankster than a villian.

VOS: Basically. What Linda does is she gives everyone exactly what they want or what they ask for, which isn't always exactly what they want. As to what I meant by that, I leave entirely up to our readers.
(Laughter)

CPL: What it sounds like an E-Man with sexual overtones as far as the tongue and cheek type humor.

VOS: I thought E-Man had a lot of sexual over-tones!

CPL: It does. If you ever talked to Cuti! (Laughter) He keeps it very subtle.

VOS: I think the idea is tremendous.

CPL: An exotic dancer, that has all kinds of implications. They never use go-go or stripper always exotic dancer. They never show her in action. So you don't know exactly what she does.

VOS: Well that's better because I have some great fantasies about her.

NUMBER 1

CRYPT of LUST

OH, DARLING!! WHY ARE YOUR KISSES SO COLD?!

TORRID PASSION AMONG THE TOMBSTONES!! READ.. "SOMETHING JUST CAME UP!"

ADULTS ONLY

CPL: Yes! A lot of fans do, you know! Nova has the qualities that fans will fantasize about ... the personification of femininity, so to speak.

VOS: While we're on the subject ... that's something I really want to be careful about with Linda Lovecraft. I don't want to conceive the ultimate man's woman, I want to conceive the ultimate woman. If I continue on with the strip, I really want it to be written by a woman. I think with me doing it, it would become a very sexist thing, and I don't want to see that. I'm not an advocate of woman's lib. And I'm sure anybody that looks at my work will probably be the first to say, "That's for sure!" (Laughter) But at the same time, I'm aware that I'm a chauvanist.

CPL: Okay, what about your own desires as far as commercial comics go? You said you really don't feel fulfilled on the Kung-Fu strip ... what would you like to do?

VOS: Okay, commercial comics, I think, there is a ton of stuff you can do and be fulfilled doing, unless you're one of the really great geniuses, and I don't think I'm one of the really great geniuses ... I think my stuff is competent. I work at it as hard as I can.

CPL: People can usually sense enthusiasm in an artists' work. You, Jim, and Al have that in your work.

VOS: Oh sure, I have enthusiasm about my work but one thing I think you have to be careful of is realizing what you are capable of. In American comics, at this point, center very much on violence. I'm not saying that's good or bad, as a moral judgement, but I'm saying that the central theme in all American comics is a violence-orientated thing.

CPL: But that's true of all the media: movies, television, books.

VOS: That's true. After all, it's just a reflection of the American way of life, but comics is what I am familiar with. So that's where I sit. I think what comics really need now is a different slant. One thing we really need in the industry, (and again if it doesn't sell you can't have it) is a return to the funny animal strips. More cartoon-orientated strips. I think what Marvel comics has done, in their field, is probably tremendous! But I see there's a lot of fields that are being ignored. Fans, when they think about comics, think about Marvel comics ... and that's it.

CPL: Just Conan ... Captain Marvel ... F.F. ... Etc. ...?

VOS: Yeah, and a lot of other things on the field is being ignored! And a lot of creative people are turning away from it. Right now I'm doing a romance story. But I really wish there were three or four people in the field, who really turned a lot of creative energy toward romance stories. And I think you'd see some really great stuff.

CPL: Heart retching things? (Laughter)

VOS: No. I think you'd see some good stuff! Maybe we could get away from all this stop ... the same old stories ... boy meets girl ... she thinks she doesn't like him, but in the end, it turns out that she does. Yech. If you really put a lot of creative energy into something you could start turning out a good romance story. I think Steranko's story that he did in romance form, was a good example. But I don't think it had to stop there. I think you could go a lot farther with that. In that same way I think there are other fields too. I really believe we need a lot more humor in our comic strips. If you look at the European comics, you'll find that they are very humor-orientated. Like the old Disney stuff was adventured-based. But there was a lot of humor in them. And I think that's something that's missing now. There is this whole attempt to get as much realism as possible in the comic books.

CPL: Relevancy.

VOS: Yeah. I think that's good, but I don't think it's the only thing, I would love to see more strips like the Spirit, Rog-2000, things like that.

CPL: Many of the now running serious comics have the potential of a tongue-in-cheek humor book. I personally think the Hulk has unlimited humor potential. Len Wein has been using a bit of it in his more recent issues of Hulk.

VOS: Well. I think you see a lot of that at Marvel now and then, but I think you need to see it done even more. That's the kind of stuff I'd like to do.

CPL: That's what it needs ... more humor.

VOS: The type of person that I am, I don't think that in my work, I could really project and capture a lot of violent material and make it come off.

CPL: You don't enjoy doing the violent aspects of comics, then?

VOS: I won't say I don't enjoy it, it's just that I can't capture the feeling for it like some artists can. Jim Starlin can do it very well, Buckler does also. Probably the ultimate at capturing it would be ... Frazetta, because there may not always be a lot of violence portrayed in Frazetta's work. But just the whole feeling of tension is there. There is an emphasis on that in comics today. It's good, in a sense but only complaint is that it's over-done! I would like to see comics go in different directions.

CPL: Who is your favorite comic book character? The one you would like to do?

VOS: Boy ... if I could do any character ... hmmm ... I would probably do one of the Burroughs characters. Probably Carson of Venus. It's a character that I would really love to do.

CPL: Kaluta did a really good job.

VOS: I'd hate to follow him.

CPL: You're totally different from Kaluta.

VOS: Yeah.

CPL: I think every artist has the desire to do Burroughs at one time or another, because they're the ultimate adventure characters.

VOS: I wouldn't have much desire to do Tarzan. I love Kubert's. But again he isn't a character that I'd like to do. As far as a regular comic book character I think Dracula would be extremely fun. Fu Manchu I really love doing. When I was younger, my favorite comic book heroes were like Hawkman. I'd love to do a Hawkman too, he's like my favorite super-hero. My really favorite heroes were in the books. I did a lot more reading than I did reading of comic books, or least in amount of time. So when it comes to doing favorite characters I love to do adaptations of the books. A Fu Manchu would be the ultimate thing for me.

CPL: Never know, if Marvel gets around to it, you might see it.

VOS: I think Marvel is going to do one with Frank Brunner and Steve Englehart.

CPL: I heard about it but I don't think they have the rights to do adaptations under the name is what I understand. You'll find out I'm sure eventually.

VOS: Well, the really great Fu Manchu adaptation was the Wally Wood "Mask of Fu Manchu." Have you ever seen that?

CPL: No I haven't.

VOS: It's really beautifully done. It must of come out in the late 40's or early 50's. He really captured Fu Manchu I thought. But it would never go over to Marvel comics because Fu Manchu was too old and too low key.

CPL: Yeah.

VOS: It's kind of strange. When I would draw Fu Manchu, half the people at Marvel didn't want to insult the oriental.

CPL: They're worried about ethnic problems?

VOS: Yeah, and yet when you draw Fu Manchu if you didn't draw the overly oriental characteristics

CPL: Yellow-peril type person

VOS: Right They'd say well redo this It was strange

CPL It's hard to do a character that was written on that basis, yellow-peril, or the ethnic type characteristic stereotype that Fu Manchu was the evil genius from China, without drawing him that way It's impossible to have them all look like Bruce Lee.

VOS: I remember one time when I drew Fu manchu One of the comments was, "he looks too much like Ming the Merciless " Well Ming the Merciless was like a direct Fu Manchu rip-off But that's the kind of things you run into So maybe it would be better if I never did Fu Manchu because I would never be happy with what people wanted me to do with the character

CPL: Marvel's afraid of stepping on peoples toes

VOS They've got a point because the way Fu Manchu should be done to sell in the comic is completely different from the way he should be done to sell in a book But artistically I'd be upset by it So each one of us in our way is right about what they're doing

CPL: There're a lot of good characters that haven't been adapted I'm glad this kind of thing is happening here, their adapting science fiction? Do you do much on your own?

VOS: I'm not familiar with a lot of science fiction I'd say that that's another area where I would love to do some work in. I really enjoy the EC adaptations of Bradbury I've probably read more Ray Bradbury science fiction than anything else I think it's very youth orientated I haven't read much science fiction to say I was a fan All I've read was a little Heinlein

CPL: What about fantasy?

VOS: I don't know I haven't read a lot of fantasy I read the Conan series, that's about it The stuff that I have always really enjoyed more or less, the tales of supernatural stories.

CPL: H.P. Lovecraft

VOS. And detective fiction and murder mysteries I would love to do murder mysteries in comic books, it would really be fun. Again they would be very difficult to adapt because things that make a murder mystery exciting when you read it wouldn't make it exciting in a comic book. I think you see that in films. You have to know each form. In comic books you can restructure the world as you want it. But in reality you can't do that That's why comics are important now

CPL: In comics you are the shaper of events

VOS: For a lot of people their lives are going to shaped by the world around them Much more than the last 20 years. We're going to need a lot of comic books to get us through A lot more humor (Laughter)

CPL: We're going to need a lot more tape, too we're running out Let's conclude What do you think of fandom Mike, now that you're on the other side?

VOS Fandom is a neat thing for comic book people It's neat for the fans themselves becuase it gives them a chance. The young people, that gives them a chance to see how the business is run And it gives them a chance to play around with it a bit It's a starting point And also really wonderful for the people in the business because it gives them a chance to see how they appreciate it I remember when I started writing to some of the professional artists back in the 60's that had been around for 20 years. I really doubt if they realized how much people really enjoyed their work and how much people really know who they were. I never sat down and asked Kubert about this But I'm sure now Kubert realizes how many people are fans when he was doing hawkman. And these other things I'm sure he was probably surprised when people started writing in saying," Hey I always liked Kubert's stuff," and it really began to surprise him Not only Joe but I bet a lot of people in the industry were surprised at how many people really aware of who they were and what they were doing Involved in work. And like myself I'm always amazed when people come up to me at conventions and say," Gee, you're Mike Vosburg and I saw your work." It kind of puts you in unrealistic situation because for really what you're doing you're getting an enormous amount of attention

CPL: Just drawing something you enjoy doing

VOS: It never fails to impress me that as a comic book artist I can go to conventions and have a lot of people get excited over who I am and if I were a doctor or a lawyer, who in their own way are probably more important People would be polite, but just not as impressed

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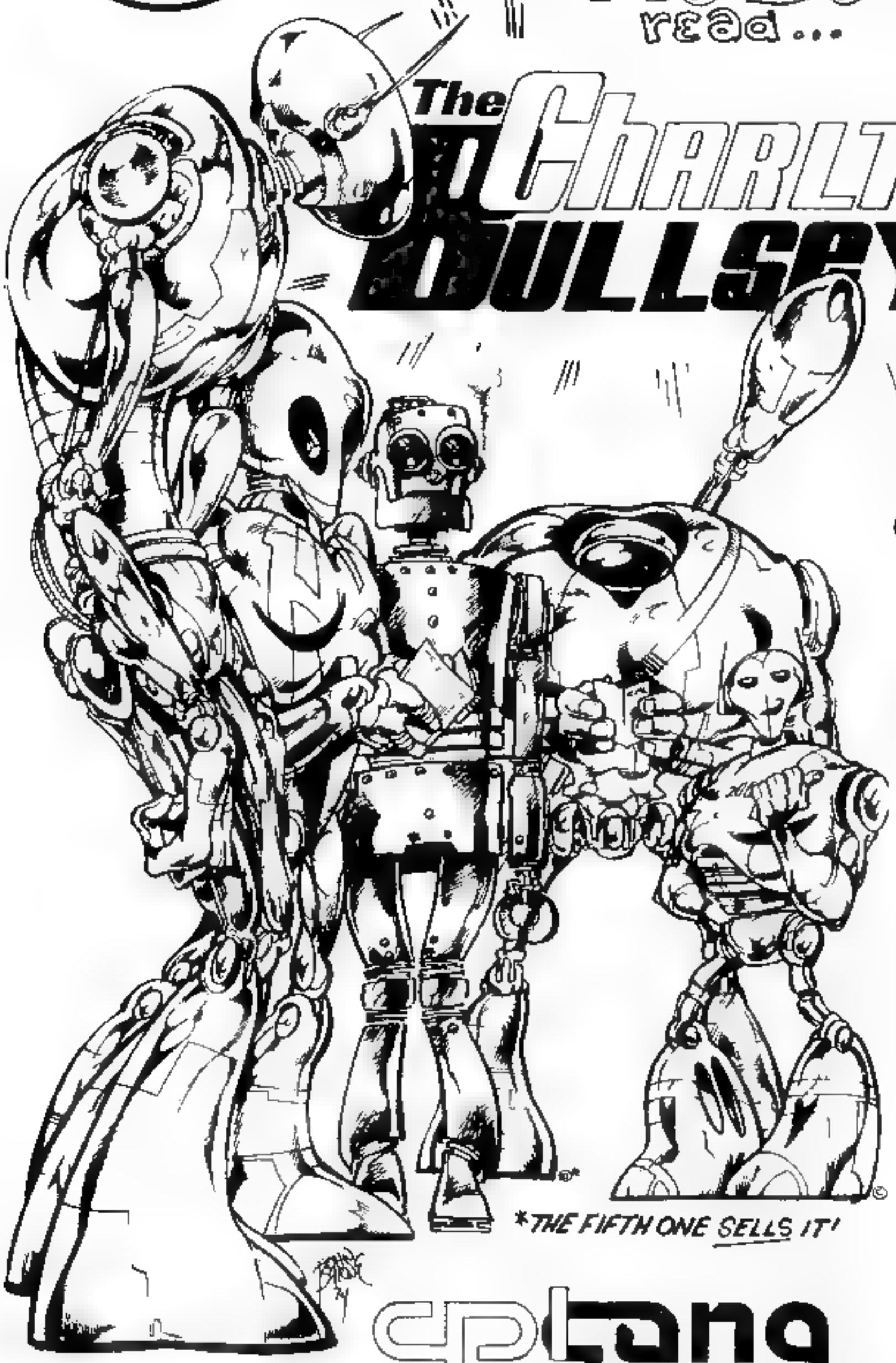

*THE FIFTH ONE SELLS IT'

gang publishing

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CENTERSPREAD PHOTOGRAPHY HERB TRIMPE
ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN L BYRNE

COLOR HIM GREEN!

Life hasn't always been a bed of roses for this issue's centerspread boy! Born Robert Bruce Banner our emerald compadre prefers to be called Hulk

"Hate puny Banner!" says the green behemoth with a sneer And his manner suggests that you'd best change the topic

Hulk loves the great out-of-doors, and nine times out of ten that's where you'll find him bounding about the countryside, communing with nature from the sunny Southwest to the frozen North

A pacifist by nature Hulk has definite thoughts about the military "Don't like Army Don't like Air Force Always shoot, bomb, make noise! Dumb! All dumb!" says Hulk And yet, our green-skinned gumba has been known to get his dander up on occasion

"People bother Hulk " he admits "Hulk Stomp! Nothing is stronger than Hulk!"

Yes, and though his straight-forward manner has cost him a few friends at times and made him a bit of a loner, things are definitely looking up for the Hulk Nowadays you might periodically bump into him in Manhattan's Greenwich Village as he visits friends

Whatever the case you can look for the big green galoot to be doing bigger and better things as time goes by

After all nobody can beat the Hulk!

H
HERB TRIMPE

GRANT'S TOMB

Seaboard shoots the works but unfortunately not the editors!'

BY STEVEN GRANT

'Comics s an escap st med um, no matter what the psychologists say If you enterta n and make a valid social po nt then all the better But first and foremost entertainment is our bag

And just as Atlas was a t tan in Greek mythology so plan we to be a t tan of comic books If there's any doubt n your m nd as to whether or not we can do it, take a ook at our line-up 'cause this is what comics s all about!"

Like most people I first heard of Seaboard at the New York Convent on on July 4th I was thrilled Seaboard had special deals and was promising relat ve artistic freedom Hoards of great ta ent were reported to have flocked to the company Great th ngs were in store

I am not normally th s naive But it s hard not to be carried away with such obvious hopes

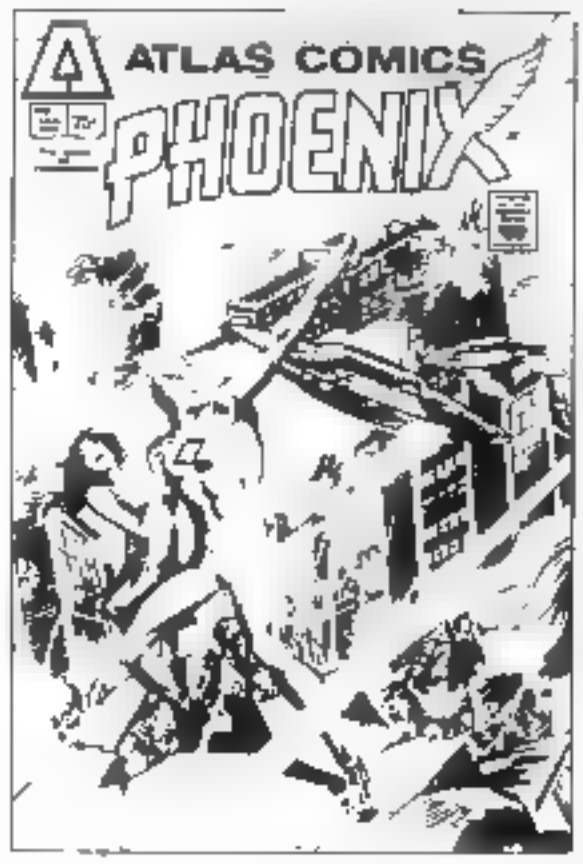
Months later Seaboard, who in the meant me had adopted the name Atlas, announced their lineup to **The Comic Reader** and **Mediascene** Suddenly Atlas did not look so thrilling, but I decided to hold off making an op nion unt l I could see the actual books And finally the first three titles appeared

Not prec sely the f rst Atlas had previously released two rather nondescript b ack and white titles a **Famous Monsters of Filmland** parody called **Movie Monsters**, and an unmemorab e horror book w th the cumbersome t tle of **Weird Tales of the Macabre** The ess said of these the better

A brief aside At as covers are awfu As a friend of mine pointed out they don't look like comic book covers, they look like someone s imitation of com c book covers Unfortunately true Despite the talents of such people as D ck G ordano and Neal Adams, the first three books have covers resembling nothing so much as Aurora Hobby Kits frontpieces Uninteresting design, static poses, and gaudy coloring Heightening the dul look are the rather b ank look ng ogo design, almost certa nly ca cu ated to make sure that the title of the book doesn t catch your eye

PHOENIX appears to be At as's answer to Superman Draw ng on the now rampant Gods From Outer Space theme, editor writer Jeff Rovin with an uninteresting concept looking for a comprehensible plot A hyperemotional astronaut s saved from certa n death by aliens living at the north po e The al ens were once responsible for the evolution of mankind, and their characterization beg ns w th altru stic benevo ence and quickly degenerates into paranoia. Astronaut Ty er is just br ant enough to be ab e to understand the alien s weapons and turns his spacesuit into a superweapon which they are incapable of counteri ng The aliens destroy Reykjavik, Ice and, then Phoenix (Tyler) destroys their base, long distance yet but enough aliens survive to, n a fit of muddled priorities, pun sh Tyler and then destroy the human race To be continued Poss bly ad nauseum

Rovin seems to be eve that characterizat on entails being able to get angry at the proper times, and th s is the sum of the character of Phoenix Atlas seems to be puff ng this book end essly refering to Phoenix as The



Man of Tomorrow (for those who didn t take my word for the Superman compar son) and "the greatest story even to d " Amendola s work is nice, but suffers from s oppy inking Th s is al right for a backup feature, but one expects more polished work on a ead The ent re concept of the book, however, is sta e But noth ng exceed ike success, and an old story, I suppose deserves retelling Even o d stor es deserve better retellings than th s, though

Those of you who always wanted to see a cross between The Spectre, The Ghost Rider, and Dr Syn of Romney Marsh Mike F eisher and Ern e Colon have created **The Grim Ghost** I can t for the life of me figure out what they re go ng to do with this one, though t s the most interesting concept of the three The story consists of a one-ended framing story and the origin of The Grim Ghost with no attempt to connect the two Grim Chost s a spectra highwayman cast into the twentieth century, certa n y not an overworked idea and one that could yield many nteresting poss b l t es

a l l os ©seaboard pub

t s a comment on the ab ities of Mike F le sher and Ernie Colon that they have found none of them Colon s art wh e nteresting, is uneven and Fleisher s story wh e sem -coherent, lacks a most important element of com c book story-tell ng tension The fragmented story breaks from the frame piece to the origin with no method of return We are, at the end left w th no interest in what has gone before, and even worse no way of gett ng interested in what is yet to come

Lastly we are left with no nterest in Matthew Dunsinane, The Grim Ghost, who s portrayed as a vain pompous, womaniz ng scoundre Seeing the devil s Puckian attr butes s faintly amus ng but the pact scene has no effecton the rest of the book We can reta n lit e nterest in a character who can remove a opposition with a wave of the ttle finger or who can shoot a man in cold blood, and then pat himself on the back for t It s doubtfu that such a character and such a book wi be able to deve op a steady audience capable of keep ng it alive It is doubtful that it will be m ssed

I w ll refra n from d scussing Mike Sekowsky's du disproport onate artwork on IRONJAW, the third At as fit e and concentrate on Mike Fleisher s bana unimag native hacking scriptwork

As if the creators responsib e for iron Jaw fe t that the book needed some sort of justif cation there is a sect on in the back of the book ca ed "The World of Iron Jaw" (ron Man, Iron Wolf Iron Fist Iron Jaw does comics perhaps have too many irons n the fire?, As de from comments about the perpetrators of Iron Jaw, there s this abso utely ridicrous statement "Iron Jaw unlike other comic book characters, is a rea human be ng What he th nks, what he says how he reacts, are all guaged by what M ke fee s a rea man p aced in that same s tuation would do " We shal return to this concept in a moment

Iron Jaw#1 is sword and sorcery plot 8D wanderer comes to a and gets involved in f ght with soldiers Evil king f nds out that wanderer is actua y rightful ruler of that and Wanderer thrown in dungeon and freed by princess F ghts n arena (this will be in #2) and s ays evi king, regaining throne Surpr sed? No? t you'd heard it you should have stopped me

But Iron Jaw has one fascinating side it g ves us real ins ght nto the work ngs of Fleisher's mind It is interesting that Fle sher's concept of a "real man" is one character zed by emot on ess brutality and motivated ent rely by horniness For Fleisher, the difference between a good man and a bad man is simp e the bad man f nds humor in bruta ty, the good man refuses to react tohis own brutality at al This is the pattern evident in Jonah Hex, The Spectre, and Gr m Ghost and t now becomes evident in IronJaw

The statement about the realness of Iron Jaw is ludicrous because Iron Jaw bears not even the faintest resemblance to a rea human being, but is at best, a reactionless empty construct He deals with other people on a single level men should be killed, women should be raped and degraded He speaks on y in conjunct on ess truisms, as though he were try ng to read them off of cue cards w thout his g asses

Ludicrous because to p ace a "real man in a sword and sorcery background, unless it is done with the f nesse of such th ngs as Pratt and deCamp's Harold Shea stor es is to ignore the mythic context of sword and sorcery A hero of this genre **must** be larger than life an archetype To reduce him to merely human is to render him uninteresting Fleisher has made iron Jaw all the less interesting by reducing him to less than human and then even mut ating him with a ron jaw, a blunder wh ch w surely tell in the sales returns

To explain away the dense macho att tudes in Iron Jaw by expla ning it as being a fantasy wor d is begging the question The fantasy, what parts of it he can lay c aim to do ng anything besides lifting verbat m, is Fleisher s Iron Jaw's treatment of women his terms of interpersona relat onships, his pred ec-tion toward grat tous vio ence, are, in a word, sick If Fle sher truly believes that a 'real man" would act this way, perhaps it would be wisest if he sought professional help before vent ng h s adolescent power fantasies in public print w il no longer suff ce If not, then what poss ble reasons outs de of sheer az ness, could he have had for produc ng this n the first place?

Unfortunately, Atlas is what comics is all about the same old end essly reworked formulae, reappearing ad nauseum with one eye on the sales charts The Atlas product is so very obv ously tied up with 'sure money that it very obviously lacks the enthus asm which was inherent n the great trend setters of the past, in Superman, EC, and Sp derman when they f rst appeared (And the enthusiasm which exists in E-Man today) If Atlas s goal is to create interesting new concepts, it is unlikely they will succeed The first three out ngs have been a d sappointment and a betrayal of the talents which they have at their command

NEXT WULF THE BARBARIAN, THE DESTRUCTOR AND THE SCORPION

LETTERS

Dear Gang

CPL 11 came my way It looks good, and thus a letter of comment

Steve Gerber had an interesting co umn Weird, but interesting I wish he would have refrained from the eaten sweeten beaten, you cretin' type of writing (which sounds like a bra n droo ng) The big boys and g rls. if you want to throw in Gertrude Stein may have made their reputations in mainstream litera ture with the techn ques but it comes across poor y in a fanzine Steve s points about conglomerates are we taken and important, but they are unnecessar y obscured by his fancy-dan affections

I want to be happy ' Oh, **come on**! Is this fellow writing for Marvel or one of Magazine Management s confession magaz nes?

But about relevancy it occured to me some while back that the comics of the forties were often **very** relevant to the r times Gangsters, bank robber es, and World War II were the stuff of head nes and radio news, as well as of comics The comics then ref ected their era better than the com cs that were to come I think How relevant is a horror comic? Or a comic about Superman turning into a giant grayf sh because of Red Kryptonite?

Yet, re evancy per se is not the main issue and probably never **was** even when it was a hot top c The question is whether or not the comic is any **good** An artist ike Ditko may draw his characters and sett ngs as though it s still 1957, but his style is so compe ng and he tells such a good story that you don't real y notice. He makes you **believe** women st l wear seamed stockings and funny, cylindr cal hats, and men floppy hats and proto-zootsu ts, at least for as long as the story lasts But a the relevancy in the world won't save a poor story E liot S Magg n wrote a Superg rl story for a recent **Superman Family** that featured the girl s soul-searching and her dec sion to He p Peop e as a counselor and it was awful! The villian was preposterous, the plotting was disjointed, the dialogue utterly lacked humor or even much sp rit, and the characterization was close to non-ex stent It may have been Relevant, written by a Young Person for Young Persons, but it wasn't very good Another issue of the same magazine reprinted an old Jim Shooter Supergirl story which was thorough y irrelevant, but it was worlds better The plott ng was t ght, characterization at least enough to help you te the characters apart and the dialogue lively and in spots even sparkling Come to think of it, Shooter must have been some years younger than Maggin is now when he wrote t

heartily d s ked the much acclaimed **Green Lantern /Green Arrow** issues (and the curious can look up the scathing letter I had printed in the LOC co umn of issue #88 for details), but ma n y because I fe t that the comics were more than just relevant - they were cramming a specific political position down the readers throats They were propaganda for a set of beliefs that I did not share, I thought, and I resented the attitude Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams seemed to have—to the effect that the comics presented Absolute Political Truth and it was their so emn duty to present it to the readers so that the kids in Columbus, Oh o, wou d wake up to how awful injustice and pollution are Everyone was jumping on Steve Ditko for adapting Ayn Rand to comics. but Green Lantern got nat onwide coverage and mountains of praise Unfair I thought If Dennis O Neil had the right to push his beliefs in comic book form, why didn't William F. Buckley? Or Gus Hall? Or George Wallace? Or Dr Spock? Or anyone else with a political message?

I'm more than a little bothered by political groups whose attitude towards the media is that if only they can get their hands on it, they would be able to propagand ze to a captive aud ence This applies equally to groups who would use their TV time to expose the Jews in finance and government, as well as to groups who would bewail napalmed bab es in East Orangutan and blame the conspiracy of Chase Manhattan and the Jo nt Ch efs of Staff Such groups or ind viduals, seem to regard the audience as a lot of unth nking boobs who will indiscriminate y swallow anything dumped on them v a the media That may explain in some way what O Ne was trying to do a though he most certainly be eved with all his heart that what he was writing was utter trash and **had** to be gotten out to all those ignorant kids before it was too ate But when I want political commentary . I certain y won't buy **Green Lantern**! And when I want a comic book, I won't bring home **National Review** or **The New Republic**!

Steve Gerber expressed some prom s ng thoughts on the sub,ect of writing good com cs I wish he would have gone into a l ttle more detail about what he was personal y doing to write good comics All that he said is vague and ill defined

I'm not sure it s even possible for good comics to be done in the c ass c Marve style (I m not familiar with how Gerber writes his stor es so forg ve me if what I say is irrelevant to h s working method) Throwing a plot at the artist to breakdown and draw and then dialog ing the result is such a reidicu ously backwards way of going about it that I'm surprised Marvel writers have the temerity to call themselves **writers** (If things have changed at Marvel and the artists are no longer having to do most of the work in te ing the story, I'll be glad to hear it) But no wonder Marvel writers seem to have felt obligated to earn their pay by drowning the story with words upon meaning ess words! **Spidey Super Stories** w th its terse, simple dia ogue is probably a better comic than the horribly wordy regular **Spiderman** comic but that s beside the point Does no one at Marvel do a full script? Does no one at Marvel know that com cs are not prose novels and that to wax eloquent is to ruin a story that can be to d on y through the pictures?

I f nd it hard to read Marve s these days A sing e ssue of a comic is not complete in itse f, but the continued stor es are so tang ed and open-ended that they don t seem to be really getting anywhere Talk ta k, f ght f ght, ta k ta k it makes me apprec ate some of the old Mort Weis nger **Jimmy Olsen** or **Lois Lane** com cs The stories in those were much too short and never had time to develope and they were told mainly through capt ons and overly-expository dia-logue, read ng more like plot summar es than actual comics Nevertheless, those old creakers had beg nnings, middles and endings Problems were reso ved, the story started at one point and got to another and by the end you felt like you had read a story rather than like you had tuned in late on a soap opera

I ve sa d enough

Dwight R Decker, Tujunga CA

(Mr Decker is the motivating force behind such fanz nes as **True F.A T** and the late, great **Freon** At present he s eading a meager ex stance on the West Coast, trans ating pulpish S F from the German and calling late n ght talk shows. H s letter save for a few persona ha-ha s has been reproduced practically in toto. If this doesn't start a fire under a few people, nothing w ll! Okay, peop e, let's have some comments)

WARHAMMER

AS DAWN PIERCES THE BRIGHTENING SKY, GAR OF THE NORTH SCOUTS THE BORDER OF HIS TRIBE'S LAND, EYES SQUINTING OFF INTO THE DISTANCE .

. TO SEE GLINTS OF LIGHT MOVING THRU THE RAVINES

GAR SILENTLY RUSHES FORWARD BUSHES TEARING AT HIS CALVES, ALWAYS MAINTAINING THE SILENCE OF A TRUE HUNTSMAN

BUT THERE ARE TIMES WHEN SILENCE IS IMPOSSIBLE.

DEMONS!

GAR'S LEGS PUMP AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, TO REACH THE **SECURITY** OF THE TRIBE...

FOR THERE IS **SAFETY IN NUMBERS**

EVEN IF THOSE NUMBERS DISBELIEVE!!

GAR YOU MUST TAKE US FOR **FOOLS!**

ALL DEMONS WERE **DESTROYED** MANY YEA-

BUT THE WORDS OF THE CHIEF ARE DROWNED OUT.

BY THE ROAR OF THE GOD'S CHARIOT!

THE **DEMONS!**

A DEMON LEAVES HIS VEHICLE...

.. ALIGHTING WITH A SILENCE UNBEFITTING HIS IMMENSE STATURE.

THE AIR FILLS WITH A VIOLENT TENSION...

AS EACH GROUP SIZES UP THE OTHER.

BUT IT IS A TENSION WHICH MUST BE --

--BROKEN!

KNOW YE THIS, DEMONS. TODAY IS THE LAST DAY OF YOUR EXISTANCE!

KILL THEM!

GAR MOVES WITH THE SPEED OF A LEOPARD.

YOU WOULD HAVE ME A **FOOL** BEFORE MY TRIBE!

FOR **THAT** DEMON

YOU **DIE!**

GAR WIPES THE SWEAT FROM HIS BROW.

AND HIS GAZE FALLS TO THE **REVELATION** AT HIS FEET.

A MAN!

I I DO NOT **UNDERSTAND!**

BUT IT IS THE **VILLAGERS** WHO HAVE SUMMONED THESE DEMONS...

". . SO TONIGHT...

"... WE SHALL PAY THEM A VISIT...

"... "AND TEACH THEM TO BETRAY THEIR RACE!"

THEY SEEK TO FLEE!

YOU SHALL NOT ESCAPE ME, DEMON!

BUT THE DEMONS ARE TOO SWIFT...

AND THE THRUST OF THEIR SHIP WIPES OUT GAR'S CURSE...

...EVEN AS IT KNOCKS HIM OFF HIS FEET.

BUT GAR RISES ONCE MORE..

SHAKING HIS FISTS AT THE EMPTY SKY..

...SOME HOW KNOWING THAT THE DEMONS WILL NEVER RETURN!

WELL, MISTER KINSEY? YOUR REPORT?

USELESS, PRIMUS. THERE *ARE* SURVIVORS, AS OUR LONG RANGE SCANNERS DETECTED. BUT FOR THE MOST PART THEY HAVE DEGENERATED INTO A CONDITION OF [redacted] SAVAGERY. THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN DO!

THEN THE TIME HAS COME. WE MUST FORGET THE HOME OF OUR FATHERS, THE OLD WARS, THE POOR SHATTERED MOON.

MARS COLONY I
EARTH RECLAMATION PROJECT

THE EARTH BELONGS TO THE BARBARIANS WHO DWELL THERE

GRANTS TOMB #2 Seaboard Continued or, How You Gonna Keep Em Down On The Phoenix After They've Seen The Scorpion?

It s been a pet theory of mine for some time now that a successful comic book company rests its success on only two t ties a crime book and a science fiction book The pulp firm of Street and Smith began the cyc e with the twin hits Doc Savage (science fiction) and The Shadow (crime) The f edgling DC Comics hit the top with Superman and Batman at the core of their line Marve Comics co lared the science fiction junkies w th The Fantastic Four and the crime fans w th Spider-Man

As I mentioned several weeks/pages ago, depending on your perspective. Atlas/Seaboard launched the line with their somewhat dismal superman, The Phoenix Th s week we have their entry into the Batman/crime arena with The Destructor

The Destructor, while nice, is 100% superhero cliche Though Archie Goodwin scripts, there is none of the innovat on and power of The Manhunter Though Steve Ditko is pencilling, there is none of the dynamic enthusiasm of Spider-Man or The Blue Beetle And, though Wally Wood, on one of his periodic forays into comic books, handles the inks, there is the sense as never before that th s is, after a , only a job

Which is not to say that the book is out and out bad t's sort of a creeping badness All of these men are professionals, which means that they can turn out polished products when they do a job And th s may be enough to sell the book as it has been enough to sell The Flash and so many like It for so many years But it is not enough to ch p an edge into the market that tit es ike the Flash already have

The Destructor suffers from the prob ems of most super-hero origin stories corn and a sense of self-embarrassment It uses motifs strewn care essly throughout the history of comics the scientist w th a superman potion, the sacr ficing father who g ves his ife to save his son, the vow of vengeance on the rainy gravesite It is encumbere further by an awkward name and a miserably designed costume, which I hope will be changed as soon as possible It is also hampered in a minor way by Steve Ditko's po itics, miraculously made inoffensive but kept ntact by Arch e Goodw n s script

There are some interesting moments here Allusion to graft in the police departments, the business end of crime, and the subtle gang warfare which goes on n the underworld not with guns, but with deals and pol tics, pop up now and then and add a much needed touch of realism to the story But everyone st. I dresses ke the early sixties (Jay Hunter seems to have bought up Peter Parker's supp y of v-neck sweaters). I fe is still dealt with strickly in good-bad terms, and people still wa k talk, look, and react I ke people in a com c book To paraphrase The Destructor himse f, 'and fancy approach aside, The Destructor is just one of the breed Time for Goodwin, Ditko, and Wood to start us ng what they were given to the fu est! '

I was visiting some people in Milwaukee the other day They were discussing the Seaboard titles and tel ng each other how good they were, and I kept my mouth shut until they began talk ng about what a fine book IRON JAW was At which point I stepped in This eventually prompted the comment "For a com c book fan you sure don't like comics much "

Contrary to these sentiments. I do I ke comic books And, contrary to what most of you must be thinking, I even I ke some Seaboard titles WULF THE BAR BAR AN, for instance

I was expecting to hate the book Besides a really horrible name, the strip has all the types of cliches I've been railing at Atlas for The evil sorcerer, the exiled prince wait ng to rec aim his throne, the vengeance motif, the invincible swords and badly named fortresses and all the other gimmicks of sword and sorcery On top of al this, I am getting very, very bored with barbarian heroes

So nice then to find out that, despite the title. Wulf is no Barbarian Larry Hama, the writer and penciller of Wulf, deserves applause for putting together all the cons of sword and sorcery while avoiding many of the pitfalls which confront heroic fantasy writers As opposed to an aforementioned collegue of his, Hama has actual y worked out an interesting entertaining strip

For one thing Hama obviously spent a bit of time figuring out just what this world he's play ng w th is I ke As an introduction, the strip is beautifully constructed It lets us know, easily and without unnecessary fr ls, what is going on, what the basis of the series is, and manages to give, not as an aside, but as an integral part of the action a taste of Wu f's world, of the varied cultures there, and a g impse of the rules and codes which run these societies And this is what Hama has grasped, what Howard grasped in Conan, in spite of what he said, that sheer muscle, sheer power is not enough to rule, that even a barbarian must follow the rules of society when he is in that society, or h s own rules when he is not Hama, unlike most sword and sorcery writers who have come after Howard recognizes this, and incorporates it into the structure of his mater al

The writing on the book is tight, and wh e the dialogue varies from good to being a nu sance to being just p ain bad in parts the story holds up as Hama s interest and enthusiasm carry him though The artwork also varies from good to mediocre, but it has intersting layouts and has the unusual directness that holds the attention and focuses t on the important parts of the story Hama may not be a perfect artist, but he s real good (and let us not slight Klaus Janson whose inks, though as uneven as the rest of the work on WULF, certain y improve the overall appearance of the magazine)

And then there's the SCORPION

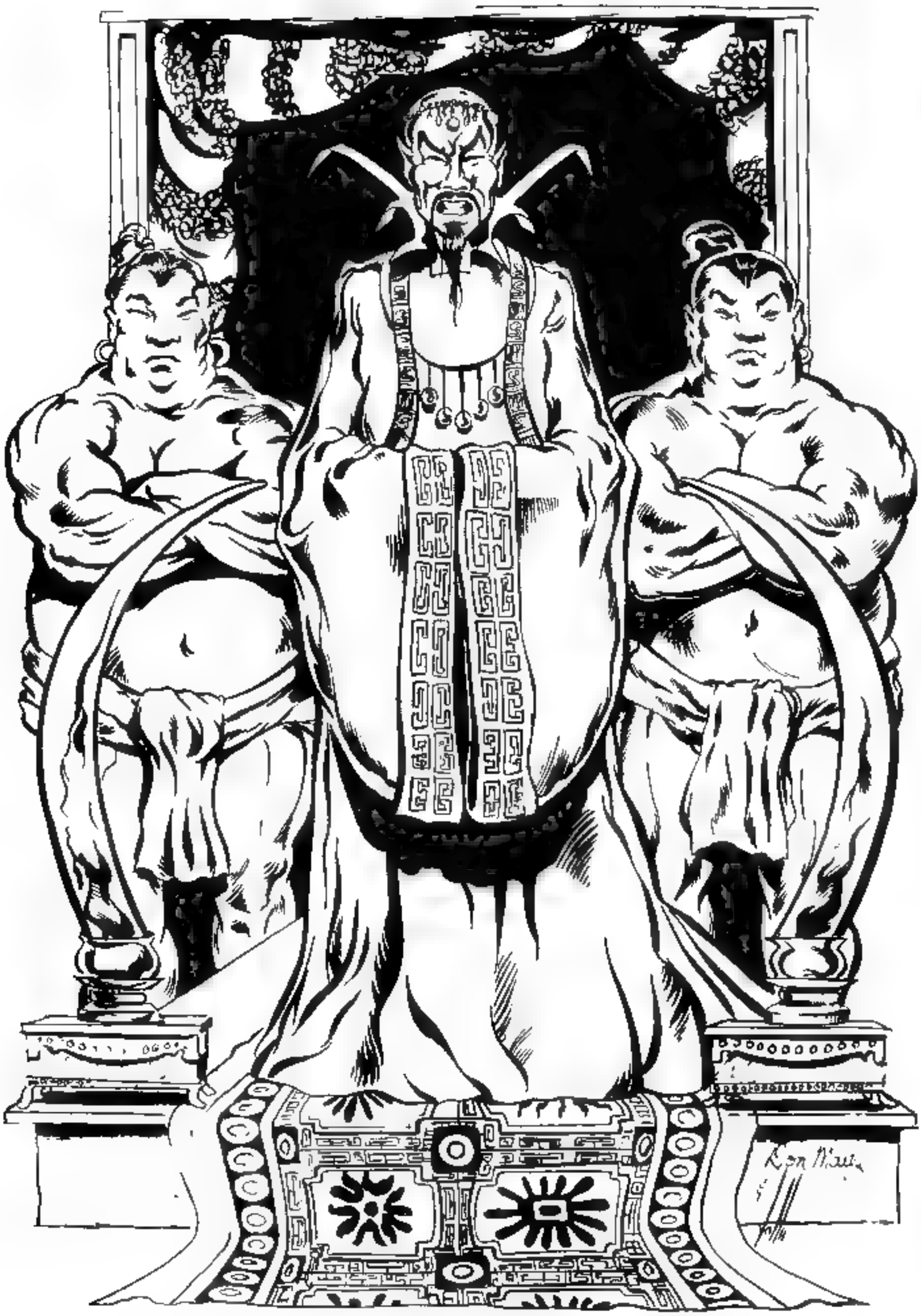
First, let me point out that I've long been a Howard Chayk n fan, bearing the slings and arrows of outrageous fans unimpressed by the vagaries of Chayk n's character stic book to book unevenness Through Sword of Sorcery to Iron Wolf through his Batman and Red Circ e stuff, I have been an unwavering (well, maybe not completely unwavering) champion of the inherent talent of Howard Chaykin

It's nice to be vindicated

The Scorpion is what the Shadow should have been The story is tight and well written without being pompous and corny The art avoids the Mike Kaluta-Frank Robbins debate by sacrificing neither the pulp feel nor action Everything is introduced, nice y tied in, and finally concluded with a minimum of fuss. but w thout oss of any excitement or entertainment value Un ike most hero strips, Chaykin has wisely foregone the tradit onal origin story, replacing it with a one page teaser and de ivers instead a very lean, impressive book, in both writing and artstyle a 20-page tribute to the work of Alex Toth

Let us hope that the Scorpion remains funct onally mercenary, unlike his predecessors, Luke Cage and The Human Target Molo Frost s preoccupation with getting paid is one of h s most endearing features And Ruby B shop is one of the toughest comic book la des I have seen In some time, though I hope Chaykin will avoid the usual Margo Lane "drop your weapons or the broad gets it" routine at the end of each story, something which he did not avoid in this issue

Honestly, I can't th nk of enough pra se for The SCORPION Along among the Atlas tit es, it fulfills the promise of the company, being at once well drawn, well written, entertaining, original, and having few pretentions in either story, plot, or presentation



THE COUNCIL OF SEVEN· REMOVE THEIR HOODS

by W· ·am F· Wu

The huge hall is s ent and empty Bronze o amps stand f ve feet h gh, with b azing orange f ames that br ghten the great round table and toss shadows into the blackness of the high cei ing Dark shapes flicker across the fat gr nn ng statues in the corners of the room ·ong scrolls hang on mahogany wal s in sem -darkness and tropica p ants lounge lazily on all ce-work screens

Padded footsteps brush the polished floor to break the st l ness Seven figures in dark hooded c oaks f e into the ha and stand beh nd high-backed teakwood chairs, intricately carved and inla d w th mother-of-pearl When all have come to stand at the r appointed p aces eaving one throne- ike chair vacant, the Seven pause Then they seat themse ves carefully and begn to relax One takes a deep breath and ro ls up his sleeves, another eans back and sighs A third throws back her hood and pouts It is the Mantis

Mantis, So he s late again This One is in no mood to be patient Spec al effects almost killed her in that ast ssue—a **tree** for god's sake

Three more members remove their hoods They are all men, of different ages, all complete y bald

Wong Shove it, bug lady Lee and Ditko used to put me through changes w th Doc you wou dn't **believe** And—

Yang Can it, banana You haven't played a major part in years and you know it Englehart's all but fixed you anyway, Clea s the new foil What good is a yellow Step n Fetchit in 1975?

Wong: That s what **I'd** like to know **Anything** to get off this payro l—you think I **like** being excess plot baggage? And Strange's HOUSEBOY at that

Mantis: Stand up to him! This One knows you had some martial arts many years ago it says so in every script you get whupped n, just before somebody bashes that shiny skull

Shiwan Khan: Easy, Mantis we a l do what we can

Mantis You re a newcomer! How dare—

Shiwan Khan: S ence Certainly Shadow #11 was my first appearance for some time—but I'm an old hand at this I was in this business in the '30's damn t And we re **still** trying to get decent roles Luke Cage got a mag there's a B ack Green Lantern how come O'Neil still has me tryin' to take over the world? I thought he was a iberal

Yang: He's writing about the '30's At that time—

Shiwan Khan: It wasn't real in the '30's either!

Yang: But ghere was a lot of Anti-As an feeling O'Nei tries to capture all the old atmosphere that element inc uded

Mantis: At **our** expense! Take Yang's example and kick fight em all! If they try anything **pow**

Shiwan Khan· That's another way to pander to stereotypes Not all of us are martial artists and we shouldn't have to be And Yang s part is in the past, too no re ation to the present just like **my** ast appearance

Wong: I'm hungry Shou da stopped for a hot dog on the way over

Yang And bald! Ba d A of us I m sick of be ng ba d Especially in w nter

Two of the still hooded figures had been conferring Now they, too, throw back their hoods and look at Yang

Fah Lo Suee· Take it easy, will you? That's not the worst of it Quite frank y, I'm fed up w th having to prance around half-naked, flashing my various parts all over the page Suz Wong Dragon Lady, Tokyo Rose all in one Mantis, you have it better, even f you do have to go barefoot

Mantis This One was just laid off· Won't be e igible for the Seven after this

Lotus: I'll tel you what I don't l ke I've worked in severa episodes of "Sons of the Tiger" and I'm casted as an emot onally helpless s ant-eyed chickie who's already fallen for that b ond jerko, Bob Diamond What s wrong with Jin Sun the Chinese guy?

Shiwan Khan Why isn t he here?

Wong: It's not his rotation

Mantis There s nothing wrong with inter-racial coup es I don't believe n racia purity

Lotus: That's not what I mean I'm not against inter-racial couples either But why is t **always** white man, Asian woman? Mant s—your father was white, mother Vietnamese **You** went for the white swordsman I had to fall for Diamond, even with Jin Sun right in the p ot Shang-chi's white mother is a single-panel exception grat u tously, as it turns out

Yang: And except for Shang-chi's parents, there is no other As an male involved in a love affair besides myself

Wong We're all eunuchs as far as the plot writers are concerned Open season on our women for all the white heroes That's not rac sm?

Yang Yin is on the out-rotation this month too

Fah Lo Suee: Shang-chi's moving into a new realm—special agent to Smith The less my—our—father and his lackeys appear in this series the less anti-As an the story tends to be Shang-chi himself can a most act human under Moench he gets angry, had a girl friend—there's another exception, Yang

Shiwan Khan But Shang-chi ki led the girl in the story And Yang and Yin will never get together, that s the whole basis of conflict in the plot

Yang· It's a k ddie book bes des

Fah Lo Suee· It's st l a start, right? Anyone else making progress?

Shiwan Khan: I'm not O Neil created I-Ching several years ago whose role was a grandfather/Char e Chan/ martia arts-expert type. As poor as that ro e was, my part with the Shadow is **really** a step backward And look at the new Richard Dragon series—as usua there s a bald old Asian tutor, tota ly fortune-cookie The protagonists are b ack and white, the has-been is Asian

Lotus. Hey, who's that stil wearing his hood? Yank it off, someone.

Lei Kung, the Thunderer: Hey! What—oh Just catching a few winks, heh

Wong Sleep ng! What for? You don t work any harder than I do—a couple of flashbacks in the Iron F st or g n series and nothing else You'd be laid off now if it weren't for the repeat in Deadly Hands" #10

Lei Kung: Of course I don t do much –Iron Fist s white, Yu-ti s white, the whole story s racia rip-off They don t want to g ve us parts that don t require martial arts and then they give white characters parts dealing heav y w th As an culture Squeez ng us out

Le Kung the Thunderer pulls his hood back up and returns to h s doz ng

Yang: Lazy jerk

Wong. So what about Sunfire—it looks like he s gonna be a hero now, w th the X-Men

Mantis. You mean a **regular** superhero? An Asian protagon st not puffed into being by the mart al arts madness? This One cannot be eve it

Wong: They already let him uncap those fake buck teeth that Everett and Tuska made him wear He missed the cover of G ant-Size X-Men #1 though

Shiwan Khan: Someone called h m "Jap" in the script it just he ps teach kids a racist insult and how to use it

Yang It was rea y unnecessary Any insult would have furthered the plot and character zations as we

Wong: We've been waiting a long t me, it won't hurt to wait longer

Yang R ght we ll see if they give h m a character role or another re-hashed stereotype

Mantis Speaking of waiting Th s One is tired of it! Why is he late?

Shiwan Khan 'This One ! "This One" Insect, **you** are more Uncle Charlie Chan than any of us here—can't you say "I"? What happened to your sense of self? Your first person pronoun, singu ar? Take in a Charlie f ck and listen to him " Must go now ' Humph! Or " Wou d ike to do this " What kind of ego-less phony-accent garbage is th s?

Wong: Eng ehart is strong on characterization but in comics, the devices are mited

Mantis: If he made This One that is, me—talk funny because This One s—I am ha f-Vietnamese then let me at him Where s he? I ll –

Fah Lo Suee: Silence! We've all been victimized—that's why the Council of Seven meets How are we going to get non-racist roles in comics? Non-sexist ro es? How can we get a decent break from an industry of wr t ng devices, exaggeration, stereotypes, fads, and short cuts?

On noise ess feet, two sumo-like heavies come into the room pulling a huge gong on ts wheeled frame

Lotus. H Tak!

Tak: Shhhhhhhhh!

The other servant strikes the gong with a great padded stick and the entire room reverberates Dr Fu Manchu enters the hal and walks to the empty cha r at the table His long robes flow in silence and he scans the faces of seated members from his height Resting his fingertips on the back of the cha r, he raises his eyebrow at the napping Lei Kung, the Thunderer Lotus reaches over and jerks h s hood off

Fu Manchu bows very s ight y and addresses the table "Good news, my Council I'm tak ng a lesser part in my son s series for a wh e The stories should be substantially ess racist for my relative absence."

A brief silence is observed Then

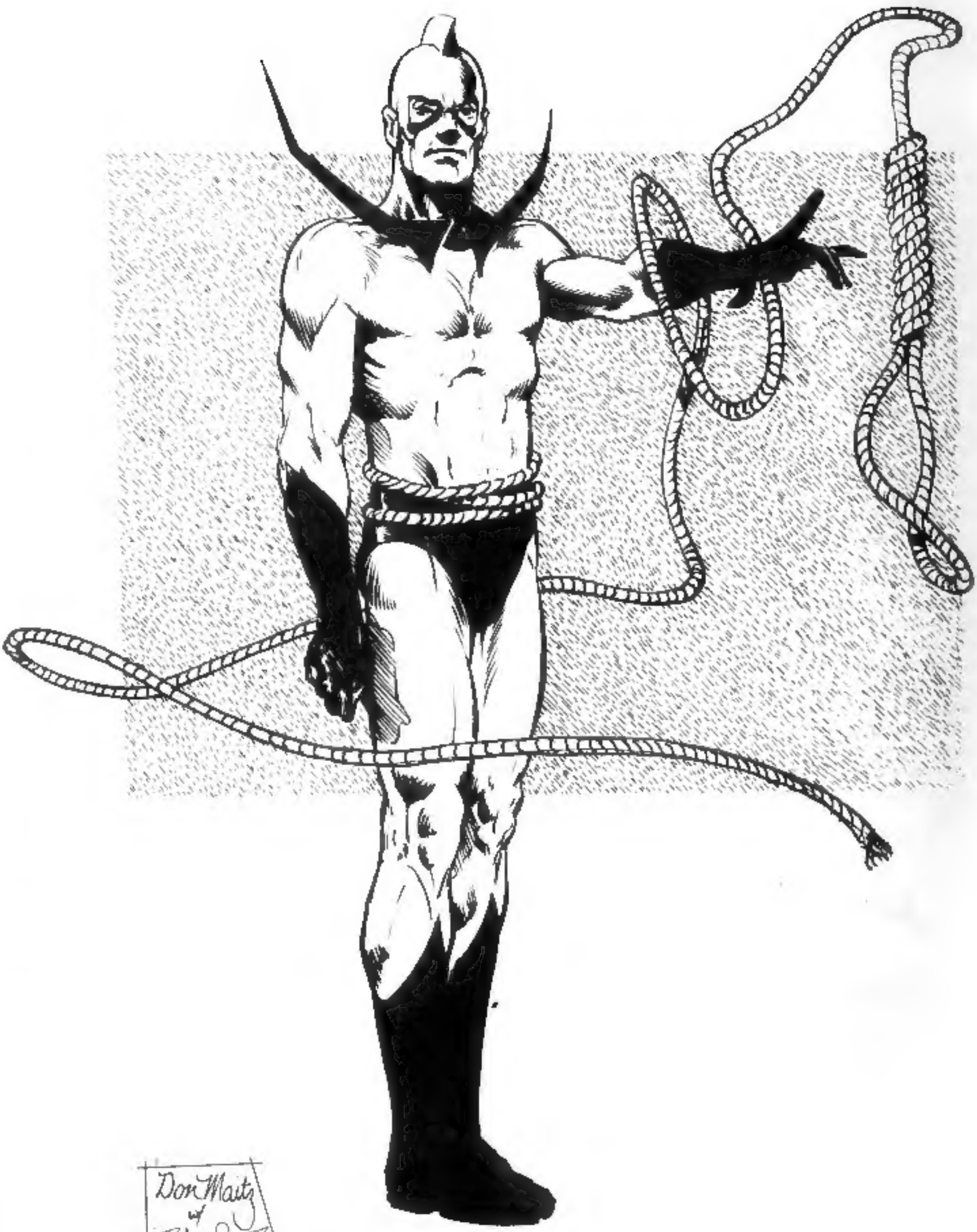
Shiwan Khan. We should al be so lucky

Wong: Yeh—such as, f re me

Mantis: Don't br ng me back

Lotus: Give me L n Sun

The servants remove the gong and the tall man takes his seat Orange flames flicker and rise against the darkness and the Council of Seven cons der their lot with mount ng anger



Don Matt
w/
Peter Snow

NORTHERN LIGHTS

DARDSEID by Byrne

Unlike Galactus, discussed in this space last issue, or Doctor Doom who will follow, Darkseid is not so much a villian in himself, but a focal-point for a veritable plethora of lesser evils.

DeSaad, Granny Goodness, Baron Vunderbarr, Glorious Godfrey, Steppenwolf, Wonderful Wilik, Kanto, Doctor Bedlam, all seem superficially more active than somber, brooding Darkseid. And yet, excepting Steppenwolf, none would even exist—in a sense worth worrying about— if not for Hegra's son.

Although he is undeniably the core of this most rotten of apples, Darkseid is, conversely, the most "likeable" of the whole motley crew. Like the quality credited to DeSaad, Darkseid "knows what he is . . . and loves it!" Unlike the snivelling DeSaad, however, Darkseid has great dignity and strength. More importantly, as demonstrated time and again, he has a sense of humor, manifest as anything from the tweeking of Big Bear's nose in **Forever People** #8 to the "practical joke" of releasing Beautiful Dreamer strapped to a six-pack of radion bombs.

And, like his ancestor Galactus, Darkseid has his own brand of honor. When he loses, he loses well. And, while honesty won't get you far on Apokolyps, Darkseid himself has a definite code of ethics beyond which he does not stray. The only overt instance of treachery I can attribute to Darkseid (allowing that we are talking about a **war** here, and that in that sense New Genesis is just as treacherous) occurs in issue #7 of the **New Gods**. There Darkseid conives to rob his uncle, Steppenwolf, of power by "killing" Isaya.

Generally, however, he leaves the petty villianies to the petty villians. Again, though he exercises his will whenever one of them crosses the bounds of what Darkseid considers "right" as with his extermination of DeSaad in **New Gods** #11. Ruthless he is, but as much with his own people as with his enemies.

Unlike one or two despots we could select from Terran history, Darkseid's ruthlessness is born not of pettiness, but of knowledge of his own power. Darkseid is a god, and he knows it. Not only is he a god, but the chief god of a world of gods.

So let's have a quick glance at the ruler of Apokolyps. He is not particularly tall—shorter than Big Bear, for example—and not very much taller than Mark Moonriser. On a human scale he would certainly be no more than six feet, perhaps less, since the majority of the Young Gods seem shorter than their elders, and we have no reason to assume the Forever People are any different. However, while Kirby's unfortunate handling of perspective makes it difficult to properly gauge Darkseid's height, we are not at a loss to judge just how formidable he would be in person. He is built more like a dwarf than a full-sized man — a broad, stocky figure, rocklike even without the granite caste of his complexion. There can be little doubt that on the day called "Last Battle," when Darkseid and his estranged son meet "in the red light of the fire-pits," even a wielder of the cosmic force such as Orion will not have an easy victory . . . if, indeed, he has a victory at all!

New Genesis and its peoples may represent the better of the two worlds **aesthetically**, but where do they stand against the technological prowess of Apokolyps? Without Orion . . . Apokolyps-born Orion . . . how long would New Genesis survive? High father was defeated with ridiculous ease when he was still Isaya, and we have no evidence to support any theory that his power has increased since his transfiguration. And issue #6 of the **New Gods** demonstrates Lightray's vulnerability (to kelp of all things!).

In each encounter with the forces of Apokolyps, victory has been only narrowly won. In the case of the Forever People this is most Evident. In six out of eleven issues they win only through outside aid (Superman, Highfather, Infinity Man, Sonny Sumo) or through the clumsiness of Darkseid's henchmen. And, except for a brief verbal effort in issue #9 of **Mister Miracle**, Darkseid makes no personal moves against Scott Free. Even against Orion there is no physical clash.

Why? Why, unless Darkseid is holding back, keeping in check, perhaps, power so terrible even he hesitates to use it? Look at it in another analogous sense. When God and the Devil were set against each other, Satan was banished into Hell. Why? Throughout the bible God does not hesitate to annihilate his enemies. Is it perhaps that Satan is **just as powerful** as God, and **allowed** himself to be banished, since battle would ultimately result in the destruction of both?

Ask yourself. When Darkseid and Orion finally battle, who will the Black Racer claim?

Quite possibly . . . both!

NEXT: Doctor Doom!!

"DARKSEID IS TOTAL POWER! HE CAN STRIKE US DOWN OR TOY WITH US AT WILL! WE CANNOT CHANGE HIS MOODS!"
-Granny Goodness

VOSBURG